



## NEWS RELEASE

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**DATE:** May 15, 2006  
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**SUBJECT:** Rule proposals to affect very largest farms' manure management  
*Changes aim to reduce well contamination, fish kills, water pollution*

MADISON – Natural Resources Board members on May 24 will consider proposed changes to rules governing manure management by Wisconsin's largest farms. State water quality officials say the rule proposals are a critical component of efforts to reduce manure-related problems that contaminate drinking water, kill fish and pollute lakes and streams.

The proposed revised rules will govern manure management for up to 165 of Wisconsin's largest farms – those with at least 1,000 animal units and which generate at least 6.5 million gallons of manure a year plus other wastes. The proposed changes are triggered by recent changes in federal rules governing such large-scale operations, known as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs.

"We all want clean water, good fishing and prosperous farms," Stevenson says. "Most of these very large farms already take the prevention measures we want them to take. Assuring that all of these very large farms take these same measures is very important to achieving clean water, good fishing and prosperous farms."

The proposed revisions would affect the 150 farms that now have, or have pending, water quality permits from the state because they exceed 1,000 animal units, equal to 700 mature dairy cows, 2,500 pigs or 55,000 turkeys. An additional 10 to 15 farms would be brought under regulation due to changes in how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency calculates animal units.

These very large farms represent a fraction of Wisconsin's 30,000 livestock operations, but the sheer amount of manure each farm produces poses a significant threat to public health and the environment if the manure's not managed properly, Stevenson says.

A single cow generates as much organic pollution as 18 people, and a farm with more than 1,000 cows potentially generates as much organic pollution as a city the size of Sun Prairie. However, the livestock operation can spread manure on land with no treatment.

To reduce the likelihood of manure-related well contamination, fish kills and pollution from these very large farms, DNR is proposing to require them to have six-months storage for liquid manure and to prohibit spreading liquid manure on frozen or snow covered ground unless it's injected or immediately incorporated into the ground, according to Tom Bauman, who coordinates Wisconsin's agricultural runoff program and led the rule revision effort.

(more)

An estimated 80 percent of regulated farms already have such storage, and Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Indiana already require at least this much, he says. Other major proposed changes would:

- Ban spreading solid manure on frozen or snow covered ground during February and March unless it was immediately worked into the ground. Research has shown that February and March are the riskiest months for applying manure on Wisconsin fields.
- Require that manure spread on land be set back from private and public drinking water wells and from sinkholes and fractured bedrock. Additional restrictions would apply to manure and process wastewater spread on areas with shallow soils.
- Require farms to follow nutrient management plans based on applying the right amount of phosphorus to the soil. This nutrient, if it enters lakes and rivers, can decrease water quality and fuel algae growth.
- Require farms applying manure near lakes and streams to implement practices such as leaving crop residue on fields and limiting the amount of manure applied to protect against manure runoff.
- Require farms to develop an emergency response plan to address manure spills or discharges.

The Natural Resources Board meets at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, 101 Osthoff Ave. More information about the proposed changes to NR 243 rules governing Wisconsin's large-scale farms can be found on DNR's Web site: <http://dnr.wi.gov> then use the A to Z topic search engine to look for "runoff" and then scroll down and choose a selection under "agricultural" to reach this address: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/nps/animal.htm>.